

## You Never Can Tell

Yang-Li lived in China. He was a very poor and unlucky farmer. Fate never seemed to shine favorably upon him. His rice paddy<sup>1</sup> was always too dry, and his vegetable patch was always too wet. His water buffalo was skinny, and his horse was lame. Every time there was a storm, the wind blew the roof off the broken-down old cottage in which he lived with his elderly mother.

Still, Yang-Li was an honest and industrious young man. He rose with the sun every morning and labored in the fields until long after the sun had retired for the evening. Despite this, Yang-Li barely made enough money to feed his mother and himself.



Yang-Li had one great happiness in his life – Mai-Ling, the young woman he had loved ever since they were children. Yang-Li yearned to marry Mai-Ling, but he knew that he was unable to support a wife.

“I am too poor to be a husband,” he bitterly complained to his mother, “and I will be too poor forever.”

“You never can tell,” his mother always replied. “Your luck may change. You never can tell.”

Life went on that way for many years, until the day that Yang-Li rode his horse into town to sell the few vegetables he had managed to grow. Suddenly he observed something in the road up ahead; it was a small object covered with mud. Yang-Li halted his horse, got off, and went to explore what it was.

To Yang-Li’s amazement, the object proved to be a small purse. With growing curiosity, Yang-Li opened the purse and peered inside. He saw many silver coins.

With his heart pounding wildly, Yang-Li got on his horse, turned around, and headed back home.

When he arrived at the farm, Yang-Li rushed into the house and excitedly related to his mother what had occurred. With trembling hands, he opened the purse and emptied its contents onto their one small table. Then Yang-Li carefully counted the coins one by one. When he was finished, he had counted 20 coins.

**1. paddy:** a wet area used for growing rice

## Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5

### LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form C

"You see!" his mother happily cried. "You never can tell! I said that your luck might change, and now it has. You never can tell!"

Yang-Li said solemnly, "No, mother, this money does not belong to me. Someone must have accidentally dropped it on the road. If I keep this money, I am no better than a thief. I must go back to where I found the purse and wait for its owner to return."

So Yang-Li rode back to the spot where he had found the purse. He waited and waited, and after a while a crowd of curious people began to gather. Just then Yang-Li saw a large, heavy-set man trudging down the road.

Yang-Li realized that the man was the wealthiest merchant in the town. To the merchant 20 silver coins were, as the saying goes, mere "drops in the bucket." The merchant had more money than you could count in half a day. In fact, he generally carried 10 purses of coins with him at all times, but he was as greedy and tight-fisted as he was rich.

The merchant proclaimed loudly to one and all, "I have lost a purse of coins. Has anyone found it?"

"That is why I am here," Yang-Li quietly answered, and he handed over the purse.

Without a word of thanks or good-bye, the merchant took the purse and turned to leave. The crowd murmured angrily, and then someone called out, "Aren't you going to give this honest farmer a reward? Why, Yang-Li might have kept all the money for himself!"

"A reward?" The merchant paused. Then he smiled and said, "Why, certainly, of course. I shall give Yang-Li a very generous reward."

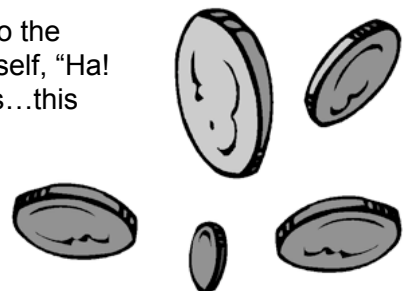
However, the merchant was already thinking to himself, "For this bother I shall have the fellow's farm. It is not worth much, I know, but whatever it is worth it shall be mine."

The merchant opened the purse and started counting coins. Then he looked up, as though greatly surprised, and said, "But now I see that Yang-Li has *already* taken his reward. There were twenty-five silver coins in this purse, and now there are only twenty."

"You are mistaken," said Yang-Li. "When I found this purse, it contained twenty coins, and there are twenty coins now."

The merchant became enraged and confronted Yang-Li by saying, "If you do not give me my five coins, then you must give me your farm. That is more than fair. If you do not agree to that, we will go to the magistrate<sup>2</sup>, and he will dispense justice."

The merchant grabbed Yang-Li by the arm, and off they went to the magistrate's office. All the while the merchant was thinking to himself, "Ha! Who will the magistrate believe when I make my claim – *me* or this...this peasant!"



**2. magistrate:** a government official who rules on the law

**Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5**  
**LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form C**

The magistrate was one of the wisest and most honorable men in China. It was very important to him that his decisions be fair. He looked closely at both men and listened carefully to what they said.

The merchant stated that he had lost a purse containing 25 silver coins, but it had been returned to him with only 20 silver coins. "Thus," the merchant concluded grandly, "Yang-Li must give me his farm in place of the money."

Yang-Li shook his head. "The purse had only twenty coins when I found it," he insisted.

The magistrate was silent and thought for a long time. Then he asked the merchant, "Are you certain that the purse you lost contained twenty-five coins?"

"I am absolutely certain," said the merchant. "No more and no less."

The magistrate turned to Yang-Li. "And are *you* certain that there were only twenty coins in the purse that you found?"

"I am certain," said Yang-Li.

The magistrate turned to the merchant and said, "Then there is only one proper conclusion to be drawn. Since you lost a purse with twenty-five coins and Yang-Li found a purse with only twenty coins, it is clear that he did not find the purse that you lost. I award the purse and its contents to Yang-Li. This case is dismissed."

With the 20 silver coins, Yang-Li had sufficient money to marry Mai-Ling and to build a large house where he could live with his wife and his mother.

Yang-Li marveled at his wonderful luck. "Who would have thought," he said, "that I would be able to afford a fine wedding and a magnificent new house?"

"You see," his mother responded with a smile, "it is just as I said. You never can tell."

**Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5**  
**LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form C**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the story “You Never Can Tell”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What is the MAIN reason that the crowd thinks Yang-Li deserves a reward?
  - A. The merchant is not being fair to Yang-Li.
  - B. The merchant has more money than he needed.
  - C. Yang-Li could have kept the money for himself.
  - D. Yang-Li is poor and needs the money to marry Mai-Ling.
  
2. If the magistrate had not given Yang-Li the purse, what might have happened?
  - A. Yang-Li might have found another purse one day.
  - B. Yang-Li might never have been able to marry Mai-Ling.
  - C. The crowd might have told the magistrate the truth about the coins.
  - D. The merchant might have decided to give Yang-Li a reward after all.
  
3. The MAIN reason the merchant accuses Yang-Li of taking some of the coins is so that
  - A. he can take away Yang-Li’s farm.
  - B. Yang-Li will give him five more coins.
  - C. the crowd will think Yang-Li is dishonest.
  - D. he will not have to give Yang-Li a reward.
  
4. The merchant agrees to give Yang-Li a reward because the merchant
  - A. is embarrassed by the crowd.
  - B. wants to give Yang-Li what he deserves.
  - C. is happy to have the purse of coins back.
  - D. can easily afford to give some money to Yang-Li.
  
5. Why does the merchant think the magistrate will give him Yang-Li’s farm?
  - A. Yang-Li is lying about the coins.
  - B. The merchant is telling the truth.
  - C. Magistrates always rule in favor of rich merchants.
  - D. The merchant thinks he has more power than a peasant.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5</b> <b>LA.E.2.2.1 Cause/Effect Form C</b></p>
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**Answer Key – You Never Can Tell**

LA.E.2.2.1: The student identifies cause-and-effect relationships, stated or implied, in literary text or informational text.

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